



WOODSMOKE

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WOODSMEN'S WEEKEND



Tito Autrey '85, Max Saenger '88, Peter McIlroy '88, Dan Monahan '87 "Dan the Man making cookies!"

WOODSMEN'S WEEKEND 1947-1983

By David O. Hooke '84

Woodsmen's Weekend had its origin in a D.O.C. beer and bull session. John Rand, Director of the D.O.C., Bill Robes, then at Kimball Union Academy as a woodcraft instructor, and Ross McKenney, the D.O.C.'s Woodcraft Advisor, were talking about the unwillingness of students to tackle primitive camping trips, because they did not have the skills to take care of themselves in the woods. Robes thought of turning such skills into an informal competition between schools. McKenney, veteran of 30-odd years of New England Sportsman shows and other lumberjack competitions before the war, had the tools for the job, and the result was the first Woodsmen's Weekend, held at Storrs Pond in May of '47 between the D.O.C., Kimball Union, and Williams. Among the events of that meet were various canoeing contests, log-twitching (dragging with a rope,) chopping and sawing logs for speed, fire-building and the packboard relay race.

Dartmouth's win in that first meet was no shock under the circumstances, but the surprise was how neatly the scheme filled the need in the D.O.C., and how rapidly the idea was taken up by other schools. (Many of the K.U.A. boys graduated and went on to

Dartmouth, much to Robes' chagrin!) By 1951 Middlebury, University of Maine, Paul Smith's College and Norwich University had joined the field and despite Ross's continued coaching, the competition became quite close. In 1952, the first meet not held at Dartmouth, Middlebury pulled the win, and though returning Dartmouth captain Put Blodgett '53 avenged the loss the next year, Dartmouth would only win again in '55 and '56 before the contest fell under the sway of the legendary Gould Hoyt of Paul Smith's, who led his teams to victory for nine consecutive years. With McKenney's retirement in 1959, Al Merrill, Dartmouth's Ski coach, went with the Dartmouth team to one of the Paul Smith's meets in the very early 60's and his film footage of the huge Smitty men cross-cut sawing 16" square cants with extra-long saws and Hoyt (or Stumpy, as he is known) standing by with his own stopwatch and legions of other judges and timers and vast crowds of spectators gives an air of invincibility that was not easily denied.

But Nichols College broke the spell in 1966 at one of the few meets held at Dartmouth in the 60's and marked the start of a transitional era in the contest. Fly and spin casting gradually lost the importance they had played in earlier meets, scoot loading, chain throw, axe throw and pulp toss for distance were introduced in their stead, square cants replaced round wood for sawing and later chopping, Williams, Middlebury and K.U.A. dropped out of the contest, but the spirit of learning through hard, fun competition remained. Colby won in '67 and UMass in '68, followed by Nichols again in '69, and then began the great University of Maine dynasty — with teams including Phil Keifer and Russ van Hazinga, Joel Swanton, the Bills Brothers and numerous other large, loud, and at least somewhat skilled competitors.

For much of the 60's the Dartmouth teams were without an effective coach, and the skills had become too refined for students to carry on alone. The result was teams which though showing occasional flashes of brilliance, were far more inclined to treat the meet as a good time with no particular reason to excell. The seeds of a change were planted in the meet at Paul Smith's in '71 when Dartmouth freshman Jim "the baby Porkroll" Taylor '74 saw his teammates at the awards banquet reveling in another last-place finish and decided he didn't buy that attitude. As the story goes, Jeff Clear '72's hand happened to be in the air for a point of dramatic emphasis when the announcer asked around to see what school would host the meet in '72, and more for this reason than any other Dartmouth got to host the meet and rediscovered the satisfaction of doing an excellent job. The meet, held mostly on the Green and dedicated to McKenney, who had died the previous fall, was a complete success.

Fired by this memory, Dartmouth started to move again. In '73 the first women's competition was held, and an Alumni competition was established, Put Blodgett, Sam Smith '49 (from the original Dartmouth team,) and others were recruited to provide coaching. Porkroll directed the '74 meet, and the Dartmouth men's team finished third, their best placing in a decade or more.

The '74 meet also saw the first appearance of another entirely green team and coach. The team was Community College of the Finger Lakes and the coach was Marty Dodge, '61 graduate of Colby and member of their Woodsmen's team. In the interim, Dodge had given up competing and "almost sold his axes," but began reminiscing again when he arrived at CCFL early in '74. Over the next 10 years Dartmouth and CCFL's stars would rise — Dartmouth's more rapidly, CCFL's more surely, in the era of the Dartmouth — Maine rivalry. In '76 the Dartmouth women's team won at UNH, and in '77 both Dartmouth teams placed second. Finally in '78 under Porkroll's inspired coaching, the men's team buckled down and won the meet by a scant 7/10 point over Paul Smith's — this despite felling their pole in exactly the opposite from the desired direction in the very first event of the weekend. Put Blodgett's coaching in canoeing provided the margin of victory.

Dartmouth's apogee was the '80 meet. Again on the Green, the men's A and B teams swept to a 1-2 finish with the women's team in second place. But CCFL won the Women's competition, and three years later, after Maine's last great victory and a stunning win by Alan Townsend's Unity College team in 1982, the CCFL men's team won the tightly fought Dartmouth meet with consistent performances in all events. More recent meets make it clear that Dodge's teams are another dynasty in the making. But through all the changes in rivalries among the ten or so schools involved and the increase of specialized saws and other equipment, the spirit of skills and fellowship articulated by Robes and McKenney remains in Woodmen's Weekend, a monument to days past but not forgotten.



Karen Wood '88

"Canoeing, anyone?" Martha Green '87.

OLD TRADITIONS...

By Putnam Blodgett '53

The other day I received a request to write a few words about Woodsmen's Weekend in the "good ole days." Along with the request came a relayed needle from David Hooke '84, son of a classmate, compiler of the monumental D.O.C. History, former

undergrad team member and now, alas, a fellow alumni Woodsmen's Weekender, wanting to know "How come the 1952 team lost," knowing full well that this has been a long-festering boil ever since I had the dubious distinction of captaining that first-ever Dartmouth team to lose. I will merely add to Hooker's knowledge that a certain level of frustration is cathartic, inducing us to long and hard practicing and reclaiming the trophy in 1953. Some of that winning '53 team entered as an alumni team in 1954, which, I believe, was the first alumni entrant.

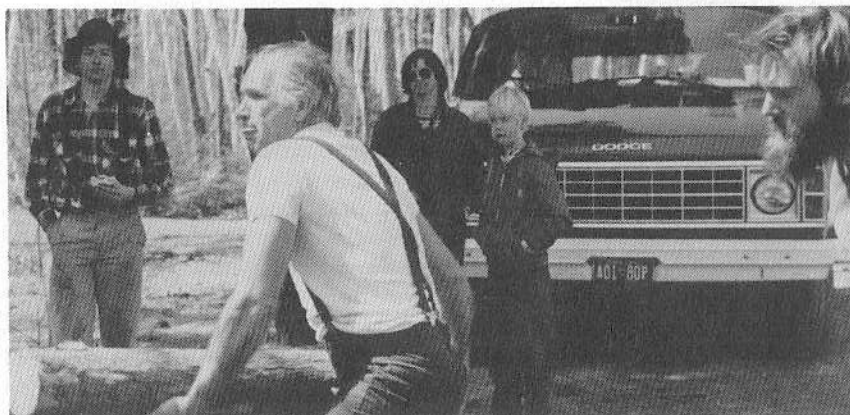
I wasn't again associated with WW until 1972, returning as a member of the Alumni Team. During that period of time the Dartmouth team's thrust had gone from being competitive in the Woodsmen's events to that of trying to dominate the drinking events. For the 1972 bucksawing the team dragged an old rusty trail saw out of the basement of Robinson. That spring the first time I showed up for canoe practice at Storrs Pond one "canoeist" was laying on his back on shore sunning himself with a can of beer resting on his chest while another was sitting in a canoe gazing at the shore with a can of beer between his feet! I still chuckle remembering the 1974 meet and the look of stunned incredulity on the face of Jim "Porkroll" Taylor '74 when the alums beat all the undergraduates in the packboard relay!

Fortunately, an ember of pride flickered to life in the mid- and late-seventies and Dartmouth Woodsmen's Teams again became legitimate contenders. Competition can be tough with the forestry schools that consider a first place finish to be the validation of their school's program, but Dartmouth has proved that if our teams have the desire to practice sufficiently, they can win.

One of the joys of those early years was that we still had the Woodsmen's Weekend co-founders, Ross McKenney and Bill Robes, close friends and woodsmen extraordinary, still coaching Dartmouth and KUA, each delving into his bag of woodcraft, trying to outwit the others.

Fly casting and bait casting for both distance and accuracy have disappeared from the scene. Axe throwing has appeared. (Who ever heard of a woodsman throwing his axe? It was his most precious possession!) Originally we chopped on round logs staked to the ground, now we chop on elevated square-sawn cants with Australian speed axes and go against some who compete on the professional circuit. Old logging cross-cut saws have been replaced by tapered Australian saws computer calculated for length of tooth and size of gullet. Saw teeth are carefully set according to the kind of wood.

But, regardless of events or equipment or evolving rules, the competition is still exhilarating, it's great to see old friends and we all can take pleasure in carrying on the Woodsmen's Weekend traditions started back in 1947 by Ross McKenney and Bill Robes.



Karen Wood '88

Hooke says, "Is Put really going to throw that??" Dan Monahan '87, Put Blodgett '53, Dave Hooke '84.

MEMORIES OF PAST WOODSMEN'S WEEKENDS

By Jim "Porkroll" Taylor '74

* In 1972 we hosted the meet at Dartmouth for the first time in many years. We got it because Tom Goldthwait '71 volunteered us. Noteworthy was the fact that Tom graduated in 1971 and was in Alaska when we had to do the work. That first meet was a lot of work too. We cut all the trees for wood for the timbers and the felling poles, carried them out of the woods on our shoulders, chipped the brush, made sawhorses and chopping stands, invented rules, organized judges, etc. We did a decent job though; the organization of the meet really hasn't changed significantly since then. Jeff Clear '72 was the meet chairman and a large part of WW's success in the following decade and a half is due to his fine work.

* The 1974 meet on the Dartmouth Green was highlighted by the appearance of a streaker. We were just about set to begin the felling contest with about 2000 spectators watching when he struck. He bolted out of Dartmouth Hall, passed between the rows of poles across the Green, and disappeared into Mass. Hall. He got the biggest ovation of the day.

* Dan Henke '76 and Oleh Haluszka '77 will never forget the 1974 meet at Dartmouth. They were competing in the portage race and had a little trouble with the exchange of the canoe. First one of them swamped the canoe when getting out and then the other swamped trying to get in. To rub salt into their wounds the Valley News printed a large picture of their hysterics with caption and names on page one the next day.

* In 1975 the meet was held at UMaine — Orono. I went up a week early to help set up. The chickens from the Ag School kindly provided some manure and Ken Van Hazinga '67 and I neatly spread it all over the field where the teams would be camping. Unfortunately, I also camped on that field. It was ripe.

* Sometimes the weather doesn't cooperate. Memorable rainy weekends include Colby in 1973 (we abandoned our tents and relocated to an alum's barn); and UMO in 1979 (the competition area ended up looking like the mud in a pig sty). In 1971 we damn near froze to death and the packboard relay course went through knee-deep snow. In 1978 at Colby it was so windy that some people were blown off the canoe course up against the edge of the pond and they couldn't move. Jack Noon was knocked down by the wind.

* Each spring a few freshmen cut their fingers. The cuts come from sharpening axes — no matter how many times veterans suggest they wear gloves and use a guard on a file they don't. Inevitably they slip, and then they use guards and gloves, plus bandaids. They also get blisters from chopping practice and forgetting to wear gloves. They get blisters on top of blisters. You can always tell the experts from the rookies early in the season because the experienced people have gloves and no bandaids.

* Whenever I think of Woodsmen's Weekend activities, I think of places. I think of Storr's Pond and paddling through the slushy ice to get down to the far end of the pond. I remember sunsets over Vermont viewed from Fullington Farm (our practice site for a few years). I remember hours and days of hard work in the Hanover Reservoir area spent cutting and hauling wood, plus similar activities up on Grasse Road. I'll never forget the insides of MacDonald's gym, the 3-2-1 Club, Pat's Pizza, Paul Smith's Foresters Lodge, Raphael's Cucina, and various D.O.C. vans. My fondest memories are of the Oak Hill practice area and the basement of Robinson Hall. All of the hours spent in these two places (and there were a few) were as happy as any in my life.

* At certain times during each spring meet I get a lump in my throat and my eyes get misty. Watching Put Blodgett '53 canoe (I graduated with his son for crying out loud), when the sawing, chopping, and splitting are running, whenever seniors or juniors are teaching their own recently learned skills to freshmen, and at the awards ceremonies when the contests are winding down I tend to get choked up. Also, the Monday following Woodsmen's Weekend is always the worst day of each year. (It's an adult version of the kids' day after Christmas syndrome.)

* The best ever Dartmouth performances, you ask? John Mott '81 running with the packboard at CCFL in 1981. Amy Haak '80 chopping in 1980. All of the 1978 packboard relay teams (we won all the heats). Bish Mumford '81 bucksawing. The 1983 women's team in cross-cut sawing. Joan Crane '83 in the snowshoe race in Montreal. Put Blodgett '53 in Singles Canoeing, 1980. And of course, Earl Jette and Sam Smith '49 for their camp cuisine wherever we go.

* Absolutely the best part of Woodsmen's Weekends is making friends. Most of my really good friends have been involved in WW in one way or another. Good times, new skills, competition, exercise, and fun with the best people makes Woodsmen's Weekend really worthwhile.

NEW TEAMS AT THE TOP

By Alex Tait '86



Spring woodsmen's competition during the past four years has been marked by the emergence of new teams at the top of the heap and the slipping of others that had been powerful during years previous. The teams from the Community College of the Finger Lakes (CCFL), under the coaching of Marty Dodge, have become powerhouses in both the men's and women's competition. Dartmouth, however, has not been lagging behind by any means as the women's teams have alternated with CCFL as overall champions each year since 1980 (winning in '81, '83, and '85). The men have not fared quite as well, but placed a strong second behind CCFL in 1983 and third in 1985.

The developing rivalry between Dartmouth and CCFL emerged in the 1983 meet held in Hanover. The Dartmouth women dominated their competition placing first in 10 out of the 19 events, with the CCFL women a distant second. Outstanding performances in all the team events and the red and purple miniskirts worn by the Dartmouth women paced them to victory. The Dartmouth A-team battled the CCFL men throughout the weekend, edging them in many events and falling behind in others. By the end of the second day, however, the CCFL team had established a strong lead over Dartmouth. This did not discourage the A-team in the packboard relay, the final event of the day, and one of the hottest event rivalries between the two schools.

The race was held out at Garipay field and provided a grand view for spectators and competitors alike, the whole course could be seen from the start-finish area. David Hooke '84 deftly tied the fry pan, blanket, and sandbag to the packframe for the Dartmouth team, but was second out of the starting area behind Paul Smith's. During the next three legs John Leonard '84, Jeff Garneau '85 and myself were only able to gain about 20 yards of the 50 or so yards that Smitty's led by. Then Dan Mullen '83 took the 50 lb. baton and stormed up the steep hill that was the fifth leg, leaving the fifth Smitty's runner gasping for air. Kevin Peterson pulled away on the glory run sixth leg and Dartmouth copped an exciting victory for the home crowd.

In 1984 the Spring meet was held at Paul Smith's College in upstate New York. Smitty's was determined to win their own meet (they even denied the women's team the chance to compete so that all resources would go to the men!) and had set up a meet that involved huge logs so that in many ways brute strength was emphasized over skill. The Dartmouth men's teams fared none too well finishing seventh and ninth. The women finished third, however, and had strong showings in many events. Their performance in the team pulp toss was truly heroic. Throwing logs that in most meets would be equal to or heavier than the men's logs, they heaved and

grunted to victory. Their winning time was a blazing 14 minutes for an event that should take only 2 or 3 minutes if properly set up. Paul Smith's edged CCFL to take the men's competition and the CCFL team won the women's competition.

The following year at the University of Maine at Orono, the Dartmouth women were able to squeak out a 30 point victory (out of 2000 points) over CCFL to recapture the overall trophy. Again strong performances in the team events paced the Dartmouth women. A standout victory was the log roll with team members proving that Dartmouth often wins by using its brains in place of brawn. In the men's competition, with Paul Smith's and SUNY at Syracuse absent, CCFL and Dartmouth dominated the competition. CCFL swept first and second and Dartmouth took a very close third and fifth.

Again the packboard was a highlight in this competition. In the A-team heat, Dartmouth was out of the tying area in second behind CCFL. The lead was shortlived for CCFL and the Dartmouth men pulled ahead to an easy win. When the event was all over, the Dartmouth alums had just edged the A-team by one second and the B-team completed the sweep for Dartmouth, taking third. Coach Marty Dodge of CCFL was left shaking his head muttering, "We copied their tie three years ago and improved on it, they still beat us...must be that athletic image or something...they're all runners."

During the fall of '85 and the winter of '86 we have been trying to involve many people in smaller meets so that we have a broad base of team members for the '86 meet held in Hanover. The meet at Warrensburg, NY hosted by CCFL proved successful in doing just that. Many new people competed and even though it poured rain the teams competed well. The most impressive performance was Julia Fulwyler '88 competing with the men in the B-team individual packboard. She was third or so after the tying but pulled out a strong first place by passing all the men in the running course.

We trekked to UMO during the past winter to hone our skills for the spring meet and to our surprise came away with many first place finishes and the overall trophies for both the men's and the women's competitions. There were only four schools competing (no CCFL) but it is perhaps an indicator of good things to come. The victories were aided by some last minute engineering in the basement of Robinson Hall where we fashioned a pair of snowshoes for the team snowshoe relay that had three-pin ski bindings. We all wore our ski boots during the event and while others were fiddling with their straps at the exchanges, Dartmouth teams would go pop, pop then click, click and be off. It was a clean sweep in the event and the men were twice as fast as the next team.

All in all the recent past has shown a bit of a lull in Woodsmen's teams success after the 1983 meet but we are beginning to come on strong again. The ups and downs are inevitable with students doing all the organizing, instructing and coaching. So watch for us in our own meet this spring. We might surprise some people.